



TESTIMONY – RB 7389

Judiciary Committee

March 24, 2018

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Erica Bromley and I am the Juvenile Justice Liaison for the CT Youth Services Association, as well as a member of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC), and a co-chair of its Diversion Workgroup. The CT Youth Services Association leads, strengthens and supports a unified network of Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) dedicated to promoting the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth and families. CYSA has been an integral part of the Connecticut YSB system since its founding in 1972.

CGS §10-19m establishes a YSB as a multi-purpose youth service bureau for the purposes of evaluation, planning, coordination and implementation of services, including prevention and intervention programs for delinquent, pre-delinquent, pregnant, parenting and troubled youths referred to such bureau by schools, police, juvenile courts, adult courts, local youth serving agencies, parents and self-referrals. The statute also states that a YSB “shall be the coordinating unit of community-based services to provide comprehensive delivery of prevention, intervention, treatment and follow-up services for children and youth ages 0-18 or who are still in school”. A YSB is a multi-functioning agency that provides a variety of services and programs in areas such as diversion, mental health, youth development, employment skills training, mentoring, other types of programming, child welfare, and much more.

I am here today to speak with you regarding Raised Bill 7389, AN ACT CONCERNING CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CASE OF A DISCRETIONARY TRANSFER OF A JUVENILE’S CASE TO THE REGULAR CRIMINAL DOCKET AND IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE, and more specifically, Sections 10 and 11. As a member of the JJPOC and as a co-chair of its Diversion Workgroup and its several subgroups, I have spent countless hours and meetings with well-diversified groups of experts in creating and implementing the Community-Based Diversion System, the proposed Family with Service Needs (FWSN) recommendations, and other tasks required from previous JJPOC legislation.

My testimony today focuses on Sections 10 and 11 which refer to the recommended changes regarding Family with Service Needs cases. Just as the Truancy and Defiance of School Rules cases were removed from Juvenile Court jurisdiction in 2017 as a result of JJPOC recommendations, the remaining FWSN behaviors are also being removed. Changes regarding removal of the remaining FWSN behaviors were initially made in last year’s legislation, and are set to take effect July 1, 2019, however adjustments to those changes are now being recommended. Although we understand that these FWSN behavior/status offense cases should not be under court jurisdiction, they also need a viable option to receive the services that they need in their communities. The Community Based Diversion System, codified in statute last session, and approved by the JJPOC in 2017, is that option. However, the System has yet to

*The Connecticut Youth Services Association leads, strengthens and supports a unified network of Youth Service Bureaus dedicating to promoting the well-being of Connecticut’s children, youth and families.*

P.O. Box 551 \* Glastonbury, CT 06033  
[www.ctyouthservices.org](http://www.ctyouthservices.org) \* email: [cysa@ctyouthservices.org](mailto:cysa@ctyouthservices.org)



be funded. The Community Based Diversion System identifies Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) as the Community Hub, receiving all diversionary referrals, both delinquent and non-delinquent. Without the adequate supports in place, serving FWSN/status offense cases, including the truancy cases already being referred, has been difficult for the system to accommodate. In response to the lack of funding and capacity, the recommendation from the Diversion workgroup is to stagger the removal of the remaining FWSN categories/status offenses from juvenile court jurisdiction. The hope is that there is time to create an implementation plan that addresses lack of capacity and resources, while still being able to address new referrals and the needs they have. The Community Based Diversion System is already feeling an impact from the changes in Truancy and Defiance of School Rules and adding more FWSN/status offense cases all at the same time will add additional stressors.

The recommendation for removal of the remaining FWSN behaviors/status offenses is to remove the category of Indecent and Immoral Conduct in July of 2019, to remove the category of Runaways in January of 2020 and to remove the category of Beyond Control in July of 2020. This will afford the opportunity to make sure that there are appropriate supports in place and adequate capacity within communities to serve this population, a population that often requires a tremendous amount of case management time.

The Community Based Diversion System was created and adopted in order to accommodate this population, however it was never funded. I have requested the funding for this critical System for the last 2 sessions and without it, the strain and impact has become noticeable. Adding more requirements to an unfunded mandate will only cause additional stressors on the System which will likely result in the exact opposite of what we are trying to do. YSBs, as the Community Hub in the Diversion System, will no longer be able to serve the populations that are so critical to this work if they are not resourced to do so.

In addition, I must also mention the lack of Juvenile Review Board (JRB) funding. The partial funding of the JRB system will cease to exist after June 30 of this year. This funding supported 35 out of the current 88 JRBs, which serve a total of 135 towns system wide. Funding is needed for the entire JRB System, as much of the JJ reform has focused on an increase in Diversion. JRBs are the primary service for Diversion from Juvenile Court. But the combination of no funding for the Community Based Diversion System, no new funding for the JRB System and very little funding for the YSB System makes it difficult to live up to the expectations being put on these systems. It also means that kids in need of services may not receive the services and supports they need in order to be successful and to stay out of the court systems.

As we continue to move away from incarceration and towards community-based services, the investment in that change must also follow. We need to continue to reduce the amount of kids entering the system by providing them with adequate and appropriate community services. This will reform the way that we serve our kids and give them the best opportunity for success.

*The Connecticut Youth Services Association leads, strengthens and supports a unified network of Youth Service Bureaus dedicating to promoting the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth and families.*

P.O. Box 551 \* Glastonbury, CT 06033  
[www.ctyouthservices.org](http://www.ctyouthservices.org) \* email: [cysa@ctyouthservices.org](mailto:cysa@ctyouthservices.org)



With that, I will reiterate my support for the proposed schedule of removal of the remaining FWSN behaviors/status offenses from Juvenile Court jurisdiction, as recommended by the JJPOC as well as for the other recommendations coming out of the JJPOC that are included in this bill.

Thank you for your time and attention and I am happy to answer any questions.

*The Connecticut Youth Services Association leads, strengthens and supports a unified network of Youth Service Bureaus dedicating to promoting the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth and families.*

**P.O. Box 551** \* **Glastonbury, CT 06033**  
[www.ctyouthservices.org](http://www.ctyouthservices.org) \* email: [cysa@ctyouthservices.org](mailto:cysa@ctyouthservices.org)